

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
of

Dr. Cynthia Azari's Testimony
before the

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs – Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
concerning

“Examining Higher Education Institutions’ Services to Veterans”

Dr. Cynthia Azari, interim chancellor of the Riverside Community College District in Southern California is scheduled to present testimony before the subcommittee on November 4, 2013. Dr. Azari's testimony focuses on how a multi-college public two-year system provides services to veterans to help them progress and reach academic and career goals.

RCCD serves 1.4 million people living in a 450 sq. mile service area. Combined enrollment at the Moreno Valley, Norco and Riverside City colleges exceeds 33,000; 1,200 of those students are veterans. In addition, many veteran-owned small businesses operate in the region, and in 2012 RCCD—through its Office of Economic Development—provided procurement assistance, international trade, and customized business training for some 61 veteran-owned businesses and 461 veterans.

RCCD's three colleges provide a range of services and programs serving veterans. Most of these programs are funded with general operations dollars (state funding), grants, and private donations. Only \$20,000 in funding comes from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 2012, more than 170 student veterans graduated with degrees and/or certificates. The majority of these graduates were enrolled in career technical programs leading directly to the workplace. High enrollment programs for veterans included nursing, administration and justice, computer programming, business administration, CIS, and math and sciences.

In previous testimony before the Subcommittee, RCCD proposed five strategies that would help the VA and community colleges partner more effectively to deliver services and programs to veterans. These, coupled with RCCD's proven veterans programs—which are being used as a model by the University of California, Riverside—and a VA focus on providing federal block grants or direct “veteran learning community” development grants to community colleges would significantly improve access to higher education and success for all veterans.

Riverside City College, Moreno Valley College, Norco College and the District look forward to continuing to work with elected officials and government agencies to improve and implement services and programs for veterans.